

Glossary

academic literacy. An advanced level of literacy that enables students to learn in depth the more complex knowledge and skills embedded in and defined by grade-level content standards.

Academic Performance Index (API). The API is the cornerstone of the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA). It is used to rank school performance, set growth targets, and provide similar-school comparisons. The API is a single number on a scale of 200 to 1,000 that indicates how well a school has performed academically. Although it is currently based on the results of the *Stanford 9*, additional factors, when available, will be included in the calculation of the API.

accountability. The extent to which an individual, group, or institution is held responsible for actions or performance. In education, schools and districts are now held accountable to provide evidence of student learning, academic achievement, and school improvement.

accreditation. The approval granted to an institution of learning by an official review board once the institution has met specific requirements. In California the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) accredits most comprehensive high schools. Other accrediting agencies (e.g., Baldrige) also review and accredit schools. Although participation in the accrediting process is voluntary, most schools use it as one means of assuring the public that the high school provides a high-quality education.

active learning. Learning in which instructional strategies engage students intellectually as they pursue given classroom assignments. Active learning is the opposite of passive learning, in which one-way communication from teachers to students is the norm. In active learning, students engage in activities such as gathering data, defining issues, stating problems, generating and testing hypotheses, drawing conclusions, and reporting and defending their work.

advisory program. A special type of group guidance experience in which students meet in small groups with the same teacher or counselor over an extended period of time, often for two or more years. A strong, trusting relationship is nurtured between students and their advisor.

assessment. A measurement tool used to collect information about student progress toward educational goals. The type of assessment to be used is determined by what needs to be assessed and how the results of assessment will be applied. Assessments can range from small-scale assessments used in the classroom by teachers to obtain day-to-day information about student progress, through medium-scale assessments used by school districts to evaluate the effectiveness of schools or educational programs, to large-scale assessments used by state or national bodies to assess the degree to which large educational goals have been met.

assessment system. The combination of a variety of relevant assessments in a comprehensive system designed to produce credible and dependable information on which important decisions can be made about students, schools, districts, or states.

benchmark assessment/assignment. A common, grade-level, standardized administration of an assessment/assignment that provides results that are comparable for all students. These results give an objective basis for measuring progress relative to standards and making decisions about individual students.

bias. A characteristic of a test that could reduce the chances for identifiable subpopulations to receive scores that accurately reflect their abilities to respond to the skill being measured. Common sources of bias may be related to language, gender, or cultural differences.

block scheduling. An arrangement of instructional time during the school day composed of any number of increments and scheduled flexibly to accomplish specific instructional goals.

California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE). Authorized by state law in 1999, this examination assesses the curricular areas of reading, writing, and mathematics and is aligned with the state content standards adopted by the State Board of Education. Beginning with the graduating class of 2004, California public school students are required to pass *CAHSEE* (in addition to local criteria) to receive a high school diploma.

Carnegie unit. The course unit was developed in 1908 to measure the amount of time a student has studied a subject. For example, a total of 120 hours in one subject—meeting four or five times a week for 40 to 60 minutes, for 36 to 40 weeks each year—earns the student one unit of high school credit.

The Carnegie unit standardized high school course credits for the college admissions process.

content standards. Articulated and specific expectations of what students should know and be able to do in particular subjects and grade levels.

criterion-referenced assessment. An assessment designed to reveal what a student knows, understands, or can do relative to specific objectives or standards.

curriculum alignment. The process of aligning the curriculum and instruction to the content standards.

differentiated instruction. An approach to teaching (also referred to as “universal access”) in which instruction is tailored to meet the needs of individual students. Such instruction is designed to provide each student with access to a rigorous and standards-based curriculum. Instructional decisions are based on the results of meaningful assessments. Differentiated instruction provides various ways for individual students to take in new information, assimilate it, and demonstrate their knowledge.

equity. The concern for fairness in access to instruction and assessment. Instruction that is fair permits all students to actively engage in the learning process. An assessment that is fair enables all students to show what they can do.

Expected Schoolwide Learning Result (ESLR). An interdisciplinary statement based on standards that embodies the school vision, is integral to the Focus on Learning process, and is usually adopted at the site level.

Focus on Learning. An ongoing school improvement process that assists a school in looking in depth at what currently exists and what needs to be improved relative to student learning and the school's program to enable the school to earn voluntary accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). This process includes an analysis of standards attainment, followed by the development of ESLRs to help all students meet standards. The Focus on Learning Joint California Department of Education (CDE)/WASC process promotes collaboration between CDE, through its Single School Plan for Pupil Achievement (*Education Code* Section 64001[d]), and WASC.

Graduation Career and Academic Plan (CAP). A document based on the academic, career, and personal and social development standards in the National Standards for School Counseling Programs. It captures the student's ongoing and evolving plan for high school graduation, post-secondary education and training, and short- and long-term career goals.

It delineates what students have successfully completed relative to the milestones required to accomplish major goals.

high-stakes assessment. Testing that has significant consequences for the participants. A student's performance on a high-stakes examination might affect entry into a special class, college admission, or the awarding of a diploma or degree.

interdisciplinary team. A type of team teaching in which two or more teachers specializing in different subjects share the same students, usually for extended blocks of core instructional time, and plan and teach together to integrate their branches of knowledge. This approach may be contrasted with traditional high schools, which are typically departmentalized.

local outcome. Reflects the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that the community wants its graduates to demonstrate. It includes curricular standards, end-of-course outcomes, local graduation requirements, and Expected Schoolwide Learning Results.

low-stakes assessment. Testing that has few direct consequences for the participants. Such testing is generally used to provide information for the purpose of instructional improvement or curriculum redesign.

meta-analysis. A method used to draw conclusions from results collected from literature or narrative reviews and data pooled from independent studies.

multiple choice. A test-item format in which students select the correct answer from two or more predetermined choices.

multiple measures. The use of a variety of assessment measures (e.g., standardized test results, classroom assessments, tasks and projects, grades, and teacher evaluation) to provide a complete picture of a student's academic achievement.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). An ongoing, national, voluntary assessment designed to measure what America's students in grades four, eight, and twelve know and can do in various academic subject areas. NAEP is administered by the National Center for Education Statistics at the U.S. Department of Education. California has participated in NAEP for nearly 30 years. One NAEP component provides states with a measure of their students' academic performance over time and in comparison with other participating states and students nationwide.

norm-referenced assessment. An assessment in which individual or group performance is compared with the performance of a larger group. Usually the larger group, or "norm group," is a national sample representing a wide cross-section of students.

opportunity to learn. Elements of the learning process, including support systems, that positively influence student achievement.

parallel courses. Courses that cover similar content but in a different context and depth.

peer tutoring. The practice of using student volunteers to give one-to-one assistance and instruction to other students. It is used to (1) reinforce regular classroom instruction; or (2) enable underachieving students to improve their basic skills or acquire knowledge.

performance assessment. Testing methods that require students to produce an answer or develop a product that demonstrates their knowledge or skill. Performance assessment can take many different forms, including writing short answers, performing mathematical computations, writing an extended essay, conducting an experiment, presenting an oral argument, or assembling a portfolio.

performance standards. Standards that identify levels of student achievement based on a mastery of specified content standards. California has identified five performance levels for its standards-based assessments: Advanced, Proficient, Basic, Below Basic, and Far Below Basic.

reliability. The degree to which the results of an assessment are dependable. Reliability is an indication of the consistency of scores over time, between scores, or of scores across different tasks or items that measure the same thing.

rubrics. A listing of specific criteria used to score constructed-response tasks in an assessment. A typical rubric contains a scoring scale, states all the different major traits or elements to be examined, and provides criteria for deciding what score to assign to student responses or performances. Scales may be quantitative (e.g., a score from 1 to 6) or qualitative (e.g., “adequate performance” or “minimal competency”) or a combination of the two.

scaffolding. Support, guidance, or assistance provided to students prior to learning a new or complex task. A teacher scaffolds the task by engaging in appropriate instructional interactions designed to model skills, assist the student in understanding the task, or provide necessary information or background.

SCANS. The name used for the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills report *What Work Requires of Schools*, issued in 1991. The commission found that more than half of all high school graduates leave school without the knowledge or foundation required to find and hold a good job. The report identifies five competencies and a three-part foundation of skills and personal qualities that lie at the heart of job performance.

- school culture.** A term adapted from sociology and anthropology. It is a useful analytical tool to describe the intricate patterns of knowledge, beliefs, and values that serve as the basis for policy decisions, organizational practices, and human relationships in schools.
- service-learning.** An instructional strategy by which students learn through active participation in organized service that meets a community's needs. It is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum. It is not to be confused with community service, which has long been a part of school activity through service clubs, student government, and leadership activities.
- sheltered English.** Involves adapting the language of texts or tasks and using methods familiar to language teachers (demonstrations, visuals, graphic organizers, or cooperative work) to make instruction more accessible to students of different English proficiency levels. This type of instruction can be given by the regular classroom or content teacher or by a language teacher with expertise in another academic area.
- pecially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE).** Instruction designed to help second-language learners improve their English-language skills while they focus on grade-level content in the core curriculum. More recently, however, the broad repertoire of instructional skills offered through SDAIE has become increasingly popular in classes for students at all levels of English-language ability, including native speakers of English.
- standardized tests.** Tests that are uniform in content, administration, and scoring and allow the comparison of results across student groups, classrooms, schools, districts, and states. There are two types of standardized tests: norm-referenced and criterion-referenced.
- student performance levels.** Levels that indicate the quality of a student's academic work on a continuum that assumes progression toward higher levels of academic achievement is both possible and expected. Students are expected to exhibit proficiency through multiple measures.
- student success team (SST).** Helps students, families, and teachers to seek solutions for maximizing student potential. It provides an opportunity for school staff, family members, and community agencies to present their concerns about individual students and to plan a positive course of action.
- team teaching.** A teaching arrangement in which two or more teachers are assigned the same students for at least part of the school day, either in a single period or in multiple-period core blocks, and together plan at least a portion of the instruction.
- validity.** The degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretation of test scores and the proposed uses of the test. It is the interpretations of test scores for proposed uses that are evaluated, not the test itself.